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Narrative

Miss Egley

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Audience: College students

God’s Rain Delay

We walked into the small, dark, concrete room. The plastic lawn chairs were still set out in a circle from the day before. Everyone began sitting down to wait for the rest of the group to file in. As soon as everyone had taken their seats, Karyn asked Carrie to pass out the lunch bags. This routine had become familiar to all of us. It was our fourth day working at our job site in Guatemala. I, along with four other teenage girls, my sister, my parents, and a man and woman from my church, was on a mission trip for one week in El Gorrion, Guatemala. Our mission team leaders (Karyn, her husband Tom and their son Daniel) were staying there for four weeks. The purpose of the mission trip was to build a church for the Guatemalan people of El Gorrion, a very small, poor village. Different groups from my church at home flew to Guatemala one week at a time to help with the project. I went for the third week, so the church was in good progress when I arrived. The neat thing about the project was that we got to work side by side with some Guatemalan workers that we hired with our money. It was important that the Guatemalans helped with the project because they were able to show us how structures were built in Guatemala, which is different than how we build in America. Also by the people of the village working to build the church, they took ownership of it and the church would really mean something to their community.

That day, we went through our normal routine. We arrived at the job site early in the morning and worked until around 10:00 a.m. when we took a break for a snack. Then we continued working until it was time for lunch around 12:30. We did the same thing every day for lunch too. We walked across the dirt street from the job site to a room where they previously held their church services or community meetings.

Carrie walked around the circle and passed out a lunch to each person in the room. After she was done, Tom said, “Okay, let’s all bow our heads in prayer. Luis, will you please translate for us?” The Guatemalans spoke very little English and none of us were fluent in Spanish, so we had a translator to make everything a little easier. Tom prayed for our food and he prayed that God would help us to get our work done before the rain. I looked outside and could see that the clouds were getting dark. I remember thinking to myself, “It better not rain because we still have a decent amount of work to get done.” After Tom prayed, we all quickly opened our lunches and started eating. We all ate the same thing, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, which may not seem like an appetizing meal, but we were all ravenous and exhausted after working so even plain bread would have tasted delicious. The conversations were slim because everyone was too busy eating. The only sounds to be heard were the rustling of paper bags and the dripping of water from our jug that leaked.

After everyone was done with lunch, we had a surprise for the workers. Everyone had brought gently used clothes and new toys such as cars, bracelets, tattoos, stickers, and dolls, with them to Guatemala so that we could give them to people who were not as fortunate. Before lunch, Karyn suggested that we get all of the toys and clothes out and set them on the chairs so the men could pick what they wanted for their families. So we had set it all up in the room next door. Karyn said, “Luis, tell them to come over to the other room. We have gifts for them and their families.” Luis translated and all of the men went into the other room to pick out some clothes and toys for their children and wives. When they walked into the room, I saw their faces glow with smiles. To me, our gesture seemed so simple, yet they were so happy and thankful for everything that we gave them. “Gracias, gracias,” was all that they said, and this time, we actually did know what that meant in English.

After they had all collected bags full of gifts, we were about to go back outside to continue working; however, we noticed it was raining. The sky was gray and the rain did not look like it would stop anytime soon. I became concerned that we would not be able to get enough progress done on the church and that we would fall behind schedule. We did not have a choice though; it was raining too hard, so we all took our seats in the circle again. From the pile of the few leftover-unclaimed-toys, Tom grabbed a balloon punching ball. He started blowing up the balloon and did not stop until it was the size of a beach ball. He then grabbed the rubber band-like handle that was attached to the balloon and started punching it. I do not know if the Guatemalans had ever seen one before, but they all started laughing and looked very amused. So Tom passed the balloon off to Pablo who was sitting next to him. Pablo was confused because he had never used such a toy. Everyone was smiling and laughing as he tried and failed to punch the balloon as Tom had. Eventually, after Tom showed him how to do it, Pablo finally got the hang of it and we all clapped and cheered. He then passed it off to Wilson who was sitting next to him. We kept going all the way around the circle until everyone had the chance to punch the balloon and get a good laugh. After everyone went, the game somehow turned into “keep-the-balloon-up-in-the-air”. We batted the balloon around the circle trying not to let it drop on the ground. Suddenly, Ramiro missed it and it fell to the ground, everyone shouted “Ohhh,” with remorse. We then decided his punishment was to go into the middle of the circle and do a trick. He did ten pushups flawlessly and everyone clapped. He was grinning from ear to ear. At that moment, I looked around the circle and all I witnessed was pure joy. Everyone was so genuinely happy. At that moment, I no longer cared that the rain had set us off schedule. I had an indescribable feeling of ecstasy and of love for everyone around the circle.

After Ramiro performed, our innocent game of “keep-the-balloon-up-in-the-air” turned into a vicious game of try to hit the balloon hard at someone so that they will drop it. One by one each of us got our turns in the middle of the circle. Some danced, some sang, and some did tricks. When it was my turn I did not know what to do, so I just went in the middle and hopped around on one foot. As I finished, everyone still cheered for me and made me feel special even though my trick was not very exciting. I was really enjoying spending this quality time with the Guatemalans and I felt that we were getting to know them better and growing closer than we had all week. Despite the language barrier, we were still able to laugh and have a good time together. At that point, it was still raining outside, so we still needed something to do to keep us occupied. This time we went around the circle and said our most embarrassing moments. It was so amusing; every single person in the room could not stop laughing.

After sharing embarrassing stories and all the giggles were out, the mood got a little more serious when Tom asked if anyone wanted to share their testimony. Ramiro volunteered to go first and told us about his daughter who was deaf. Having a deaf child was a struggle for him and he felt like he did not know what to do to help her. The mood had gone so quickly from light and happy to solemn and serious. Tears filled my eyes and my heart went out to Ramiro as I listened to him. He finished his story happily, saying that God helped him and his daughter persevere. She is now 18 and she is living well. Carlos volunteered to tell us his story next. He started off by saying that he had strayed from the path of God. He was not living the life he should have been. Then he told us about how, while he was working on a different project, he fell off a ladder while he was pretty high up in the air. At first he thought he was dead, after he realized he was not, he called out for help but no one was there. At this point, I looked around the room and saw many shocked expressions. Carlos described that it was in that moment that he felt God was there with him and protecting him. He said that he called out to God saying, “Please forgive me,” and then he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior! By this time everyone in the room was crying with tears of sadness and tears of joy. We all clapped after he finished sharing his powerful story.

Hearing Carlos’s story made all of us remember our own commitments to Christ, and it was a reminder for all of us that the church building was not about us, but about God. Lionel grabbed his guitar and began playing and singing praise songs in Spanish to bring everyone’s spirits back to life. We did not know exactly what he said, but that did not matter, we felt the presence of God in that room. As I sat there crying and sniffling, I felt a warm tingly feeling all over my body. It was then that I knew why God had let it rain in Guatemala that day. It was because he wanted all of us to spend the time together in that small, musty room. He wanted us to laugh together and to cry together and to grow closer the whole time. And because of my experience that day, I will never forget the strong faith, joy, happiness, and thankfulness of the Guatemalan people.